

may give me encephalitis,
but we'll see what the coumadin
in my veins
does for its health.

WEATHER REPORT

when he moved to california
he never worried about such
things as droughts. his only
interest in weather reports
revolved around whether or not
he was apt to get soaked. he
was glad to be away from upstate
new york where the weather was
about all that anyone ever talked
about. in california you could
generally take the weather for granted.

now, thirty years older, he wonders
why he spends so much time watching
weather reports, even checking
daily the "seasonal rainfall to date."
worst of all he is aware of initiating
discussions of the weather, as time
runs out on him, he increasingly
wastes it on trivialities.

SUMMER SCHOOL

it is june again and i am teaching
five hours a night, four nights a week,
for five weeks. i kid that i am doing it
for the pure love of teaching, but,

of course, financial considerations have
exerted their influence, a major one.
still, i do not speak entirely with
irony. it is a good time to be

teaching. the days are warm; the
evenings cool; the sun sets late.
there are no faculty meetings,
no battles over personnel or policies.

the spring semester has not yet
ended for my wife and children;
thus, i have the house to myself
during the day. three or four times

a week i swim and lift a few light weights
at the y.m.c.a. i only eat one meal a day,
and so i make it something i enjoy, most
often italian or mexican. the rest of the

time i read and write and teach. it's
a wonderful life. do you know what a pleasure
it is to declaim "the windhover" and "fern hill"
to twenty bright and motivated students?

to communicate my love of the sun also rises?
to explain how faulkner's historical determinism
accounts for his stylistic complexity?
to introduce them to bukowski, koertge, field,

and haslam? to chat with them on our breaks
near the diet coke machine about their jobs and
kids, about mine? to join a few of them after
the final exam for the ancient ritual of a few

beers, even if mine these days are of the non-
alcoholic variety? don't get me wrong: i earn
my pay; i work hard for it. i do a good job. i
know my stuff. no false modesty: i'm a good

teacher. but would i do it for free?
yes, if i were independently wealthy.
would i pay for the privilege of teaching?
yes, if i could afford it.

do i look forward to retiring someday?
well, there are aspects of the job that
i could definitely do without, that are
even, no doubt, shortening my life, and

that are certainly a waste of the time
remaining in the only life that i will
ever have. but, as i said, in summer
one is largely spared these stresses.

i have been doing this for over thirty
years now. i wish there could be thirty
more ... or three hundred. i suppose
that i'll be lucky to last for ten.

maybe only five; maybe fewer. realistically,
i guess i'd strike a devil's bargain
for another twenty. i'd be seventy-four
years old then, in the year 2015.

what inestimable sadness dwells in simple numbers.